

Kathmandu -- Ambassador Nancy J. Powell and Supreme Court Justice Min Bahadur Rayamajhi formally launched the Strengthen Rule of Law Program today in a ceremony at the Supreme Court. The United States, through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), committed nearly US \$2 million (\$1,791,000) to the two-year program which will support Nepalese initiatives for strengthening the judiciary and improving access to justice.

The Strengthen Rule of Law program, which will be implemented by the Asia Foundation, will help the judiciary in building the foundation for credible and efficient justice institutions and providing responsive and accessible dispute resolution services.

Speaking at the ceremony chaired by Justice Min Bahadur Rayamajhi, Ambassador Powell observed, "This program will not only improve people's lives, but also help pave Nepal's path to sustainable peace by demonstrating the government's commitment to provide legitimate and efficient mechanisms for redressing grievances."

The US assistance, in cooperation with the Nepali judiciary and its implementing partners, will target three major goals: improved administration of justice in the courts, increased use of alternative dispute resolution, and enhanced access to justice for women, poor people and disenfranchised groups. Employing a strategic approach to strengthening the rule of law in Nepal, the program will seek to ensure sustainability, build on previous success, increase local capacity, and assist society's most vulnerable groups.

Additionally, the program will support building the capacity of court staff, prosecutors and judges. Proposed activities will have a substantial impact on the justice sector by promoting a transparent and independent judiciary, improving the administration of justice, and helping to ensure the delivery of timely, fair justice for all citizens.